

4 (Part II).

LOS ANGELES TIMES
3 February 1987

Clean Slate at the CIA

The change at the top of the Central Intelligence Agency could not be more pronounced.

Gone is William J. Casey, 73, who learned spy-craft in the heady days of World War II's Office of Strategic Services, when cloak-and-dagger operations were the rage. Six weeks after he entered the hospital for treatment of a brain tumor and still facing weeks and perhaps months in the hospital, Casey has resigned.

To succeed him, President Reagan has nominated Casey's deputy, Robert Gates, 43, a 20-year veteran of the CIA who came up through the ranks as an analyst sorting out raw data and giving it meaning, not skulking about foreign countries on what the agency calls "operations." If he is confirmed, Gates will be the youngest director in the agency's history.

Members of Congress who have dealt with Gates welcomed his nomination. Certainly Congress would find almost any director a refreshing change

after the years in which Casey operated on the premise that the less Congress knew, the better. Bobby R. Inman, a former deputy CIA director, likened the appointment to that in 1978 of Judge William H. Webster as head of a then-troubled Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Left to his own devices, a director trained in analysis might well tilt the agency back toward its real job—telling the White House what it needs to know to conduct foreign policy, rather than conspiring with the White House to steer foreign policy into paths that have defied analysis.

Congress will simply have to find out during confirmation hearings whether Gates is a free agent or whether he would stay with the course that Casey set—which, a White House spokesman said Monday, is what the President wants.

At any rate, there is a chance that if the course remains the same it will be followed with more restraint in areas like Nicaragua and Angola.